

MADISON LEWIS WOODLANDS CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT



Chapter IV: Madison Lewis Woodlands Landscape Analysis, Integrity & Significance

A. MADISON LEWIS WOODLANDS LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

The process of landscape analysis seeks to ascertain the levels of continuity and change within the historic landscape. The analysis of the Madison Lewis Woodlands cultural landscape compares existing character-defining features and landscape character to features and character that existed during the historic period. It also addresses the historic integrity of the property. Although elements of the park landscape have been altered since the historic period, existing features and overall landscape patterns reveal some degree of continuity. (See Figures IV.1 and IV.2.)

Today the Madison Lewis Woodlands is a composition of two historic landscape areas: the garden space and augmented woodlands. The overall spatial organization of the former Italian Garden remains. Rows of spruce trees at the north and west edges, mature yew plantings, and the remnant stone fountain basin and bluestone pavers are vestiges of the former garden landscape character. The concept implemented by the Fowlers of transforming the natural woodland into a woodland ramble by augmenting the area with plantings and a perimeter and pathway system can be understood today. The woodlands remain a scenic landscape with paths that curve under the shady understory. The Colonial Avenue entry and tree allée remain as a remarkably intact historic feature and although the drive is not included in the public park, it strongly conveys a sense of the historic landscape character. A number of individual historic features that contributed the landscape character have been altered or removed. These include primarily built elements, such as rustic arbors, marble and rustic benches, the vine-covered pergola, gazebos, and bridge crossings. However, some remnants of these built features remain visible today. Specific formal plantings implemented during the historic period, notably the formal garden planting beds have not persisted.

The garden space reveals a level of continuity. The spatial organization and definition of the garden is evident with the spruce hedges continuing to mark the north and west edges. The bluestone path reveals the former garden circulation and connection between the garden and other areas of the estate landscape. The sunken fountain basin is an intriguing vestige that relays the formal character of the space. Changes in the garden space are also evident. Volunteer and invasive vegetation has grown in the area, shading the formerly open and sunny space. Built elements, including the rustic rose arbor, vine-covered pergola, marble bench, statue, and sundial have been removed.

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Within the woodlands, overall patterns of spatial organization, topography, land use and visual relationships and circulation provide landscape continuity. The continued evolution and a shifting focus on new use and management of the landscape has resulted in a change in overall character. Several historic features have also been removed since the historic period. The feeling of the woodlands as part of a larger formal estate landscape has been diminished. Vegetation is an essential element of the character of the 14-acre woodlands. While the character of site vegetation has shifted, today the intended effect of the vegetation remains evident. Native and exotic species were planted historically throughout the natural woodlands, creating a diverse mix of species, color and texture. Though this mix of plantings remains today, the spread of invasive species in specific areas of the landscape, the limited resowing of non-native plants, and the growth of volunteer plants has affected the landscape character. Additionally, individual features have been altered or removed. Historically, several rustic-style features augmented the natural woodland landscape. These included arbors, benches, gazebos, and bridges. These cedar-post features no longer remain in the landscape; however, some stone foundations are extant today.

While not part of the Madison Lewis Woodlands property, the privately-owned Colonial Avenue entry drive and tree allée exhibits a strong level of continuity. The former carriage drive retains its historic width and alignment until it reaches the woodland edge. The tree allée includes several trees that remain from the historic period. The mature trees extend over the drive, creating a pleasant effect of dappled sunlight. A number of volunteer and a few invasive trees have grown within the allée. In spite of this growth, the historic character of the drive remains intact. The interesting mix of species in this remnant feature provides clues as to the intended effect and diversity of vegetation planted as the Belair estate during the historic period. Four original stone piers continue to mark the entrance into the drive from Colonial Avenue, contributing to the character of the scenic drive and tree allée. The level of continuity and the spatial relationship between the drive and public woodlands provide an opportunity to use the allée-lined drive as an interpretive feature and public right-of-way.

Overall, the park landscape reflects both continuity and change with respect to its character-defining features. The overall historic spatial organization, land use, visual relationships, and patterns of circulation remain evident today while individual landscape features have been lost. The surrounding context and setting for the park has also been altered since the historic Fowler period. These changes have an important impact on the existing landscape. Changes in overall character and specific features affect the ability of the landscape to convey its historic significance. Although many changes have occurred within the preserve landscape, the existing character and remnant historic features provide important opportunities to interpret the former landscape character. It should be noted that much of the change evident today relates to spread of invasive and volunteer vegetation and removal of built features. These conditions are reversible through vegetation management and the potential reconstruction of built elements. Overall, the Madison Lewis Woodlands retains landscape continuity from the historic period.

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B. MADISON LEWIS WOODLANDS LANDSCAPE INTEGRITY &
SIGNIFICANCE

Landscape integrity is defined as “the authenticity of a property’s historic identity, evinced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property’s historic or prehistoric period.”¹ An evaluation of landscape integrity assesses the degree to which the landscape in its existing condition evokes the character and qualities of the historic period. The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) identifies that integrity is comprised of seven aspects:²

- *Location*
- *Design*
- *Setting*
- *Materials*
- *Workmanship*
- *Feeling*
- *Association*

Each of the seven aspects is addressed in relation to the existing condition of the Madison Lewis Woodlands cultural landscape. A ranking of high, moderate, or low historical integrity is noted for the existing landscape. The assigned ranking is based on the analysis provided and is designed to reflect the level of continuity and change by judging the factors that impact an aspect of integrity. Rankings create generalized assessments of the integrity of the park landscape.

Location

*Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.*³

The location of a property is an important factor when considering the overall design and character. If a property is separated from its location, the recapture of a sense of the historic character becomes fragmentary. The location of the Madison Lewis Woodlands tucked between public streets and private properties is essential to its initial character, evolution, and current conditions. Overall, the location of the park landscape is intact. While the extent of the historic designed Belair landscape has been altered through residential development, the landscape composed of the garden space, woodlands, and Colonial Avenue entry drive remains in its original location, giving the site a high level of integrity of location.

Design

*Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. It results from conscious decisions made during the original conception and planning of a property (or its significant alteration) and applies to activities as diverse as community planning, engineering, architecture, and landscape architecture. Design includes such elements as organization of space, proportion, scale, technology, ornamentation, and materials.*⁴

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The design of a historic property reflects the functions, technologies, and aesthetics of its historic period and can include elements such as massing, spatial organization, site layout, and types of plantings. The design of the historic landscape is evident today. The overall spatial relationships reflect the historic organization of the 14-acre garden space, woodlands, and entry drive. The continued use of the sloping topography to shape space and visual relationships is an important feature of the overall design of the landscape. The former garden remains a distinct space within the broader landscape with remnant features providing a sense of the historic character. The character and layout of the pedestrian paths and the remaining mix of native and exotic vegetation indicates the intended effect of the original landscape design. The Colonial Avenue entry drive with its tree allée is a striking historic landscape feature that remains largely intact. While the loss of the rustic style landscape features affects the understanding of the historic landscape design, remnant features convey a sense of the overall style implemented. Additionally, missing built features can be interpreted or reconstructed to recapture their effect in the landscape. The Madison Lewis Woodlands landscape today exhibits moderate integrity of design.

Setting

Setting is the physical environment of a historic property. Whereas location refers to the specific place where a property was built or an event occurred, setting refers to the character of the place in which the property played its historical role. It involves how, not just where, the property is situated and its relationship to surrounding features and open space.⁵

Setting addresses the character of the place in which the property played its historic role, which extends beyond the actual property boundaries. The setting of the Madison Lewis Woodlands cultural landscape in relation to the area outside of the property boundaries reflects changes from the historic period. Alterations to the 38-acre Belair estate and loss of the majority of the character-defining landscape features have modified the original setting of the historic landscape. The broader setting has been altered as well. Historically, the estate garden space and woodlands were located in a section of the Village of Warwick that boasted several estate grounds. Following World War II, the formal estates were largely altered through the development of housing lots and suburban subdivisions, considerably altering the historic setting of the woodlands. Transformations in the immediate Belair estate setting and the broader Village setting yield a low level of integrity of setting.

Materials

Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. The choice and combination of materials reveal the preferences of those who created the property and indicate the availability of particular types of materials and technologies.⁶

Materials consist of the physical elements used to construct a site and contribute to the overall landscape character. Considered in total, the Madison Lewis Woodlands landscape is composed of natural and constructed elements, some of which are comprised of original materials. Remnant stone features, such as the garden fountain basin, bluestone pavers, and gazebo foundation, remain in the landscape today, providing a sense of the former historic character. The most prominent landscape feature in the landscape is vegetation. Some existing trees dating to the historic period persist today. These include an interesting mix of native and exotic species. The rustic cedar-post features have all

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been removed since the end of the historic period, although these features can be interpreted or reconstructed. New features have been added that are constructed of wood, including a bridge crossing and entry sign, although the materials used for these features does not reflect the historic landscape character and rustic style. The materials of the existing landscape indicate a moderate level of integrity.

Workmanship

*Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory. It is the evidence of artisans' labor and skill in constructing or altering a building, structure, object, or site. Workmanship can apply to the property as a whole or to its individual components.*⁷

Integrity of workmanship provides a sense not only of the design and appearance of specific landscape features, but also of the character of the landscape as a whole. Expressions of workmanship during the historic period for the park landscape are limited. Workmanship is most readily evident in built features. The workmanship employed in the preserve landscape would have been apparent in features that have been removed, such as the bridges, arbors, garden pergola, benches, gazebos, and playhouse structure. While the historic design and materials remain evident today, overall, the craft and techniques of the historic period are not reflected in the existing Madison Lewis Woodlands, giving the landscape a low level of integrity of workmanship.

Feeling

*Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character.*⁸

The subjective and personal indicator of feeling relates directly to the levels of integrity present in location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship at the Madison Lewis Woodlands. The site retains its original location and retains integrity with regard to design and materials. The setting and workmanship of the historic landscape are not entirely evident today. The park landscape no longer feels like a portion of a formal estate landscape. Remnant historic features provide some sense of the feeling of the historic landscape character, but the relationship of the current garden, woodlands, and entry drive as part of a broader landscape design and setting is not conveyed. As an overall judgment, the historical feeling of the landscape reflects low to moderate integrity.

Association

*Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. A property retains association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer.*⁹

Association, like feeling, depends on personal perceptions in determining a level of integrity for the Madison Lewis Woodlands. Character-defining features can provide a strong sense of association. Associations with the original 38-acre Belair estate landscape are impacted as a result of changes in the property setting and character. Obscured visual relationships result in little sense that the woodlands are part of a broader landscape. While several character-defining features have been removed since the end of the historic period, some original features remain. The historic patterns of spatial

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organization, land use, topography, and circulation are retained in the existing landscape. Site vegetation is a dominant feature of the Madison Lewis Woodland landscape. In spite of the growth of invasive and volunteer species, numerous plants remain from the historic period. Additionally, the overall effect and intended character of the natural woodland and augmenting plantings are evident. Although changes have occurred within the park, the existing landscape would be recognizable to those who shaped it—the Fowlers and their estate caretakers. The cultural landscape demonstrates a moderate level of integrity of association.

In summary, the aspects of integrity for the Madison Lewis Woodlands landscape exhibit varying levels ranging from low to high. The location remains evident with high levels of integrity. Moderate levels of integrity are reflected in design, materials and association while feeling is moderate to low. The most altered aspects of setting and workmanship communicate low levels of integrity. However, the overall existing condition of the cultural landscape exhibits a moderate degree of historic integrity, particularly given the level of continuity evident in the character-defining features. The Madison Lewis Woodlands is a surviving remnant of the late 19th and early 20th century estates that once characterized the Village of Warwick. Given the existing landscape character, remnant historic landscape features, and documentary evidence, strong opportunities exist to recapture and interpret the historic landscape character.

Historic significance is defined in the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes (Guidelines)* as “the meaning or values ascribed to a cultural landscape based on ... a combination of association and integrity.”¹⁰ Similarly, the National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation explains that not only must a property be historically important but it must also retain the “historic integrity of those features necessary to convey its significance.”¹¹ Given the overall moderate level of integrity and remnant character-defining features, the park landscape today partially conveys its historic significance. The context of the historic landscape has substantially changed, impacting the ability of the landscape to reflect its historic significance. The contextual landscape of former estate grounds has been replaced with residential lots of suburban subdivisions with more contemporary housing that do not embody the historic pattern or landscape character. In spite of these changes, the park communicates the historic significance of the property and the Belair estate grounds. The remaining historic values and features need to be considered when exploring significance.

The Madison Lewis Woodlands landscape has historic significance. The landscape is a surviving example of the formal estate landscapes that once characterized this area of the Village of Warwick. Historically, numerous estate grounds were laid out north of the Village center. While most have been entirely lost and replaced with subdivisions, the 14-acre public park with intact garden space, woodlands and path system, and entry drive serve as a reminder of the history not just of the Belair estate grounds but of the surrounding Village as well. The park has undergone changes with regard to its individual character-defining features and its overall landscape character. However, the historic spatial organization, topography, land use, patterns of circulation, and intended effect of plant materials remains evident in the landscape today. Combined with remnant historic features, the Madison Lewis Woodlands is a landscape with strong interpretive value.

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The two-part structure of the landscape analysis explores the level of continuity and change in the Madison Lewis Woodlands landscape as well as the landscape integrity and historic significance. Although changes have occurred in the park landscape that alter the setting and character, a considerable degree of continuity has been retained. Further, the landscape provides several valuable opportunities to interpret the historic character of the estate grounds. This understanding of the interrelationships of landscape character, continuity and change over time, and integrity can serve as a basis for future treatment and management efforts. With this landscape analysis, a framework is created from which landscape stewardship and recreational and interpretive opportunities for the valued historic landscape can be preserved and enhanced to strengthen public park access, enjoyment, education and interpretation of history and nature, maintainability, and recreational opportunities.

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¹ Charles A. Birnbaum, with Christine Capella Peters, *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, (Washington DC: 1996), 5; National Park Service, *NPS-28: Cultural Resource Management Guideline* (Washington DC: 1998); *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques*, U.S. department of the Interior National Park Service, Cultural Resource Stewardship and Partnerships, Park Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes Program (Washington DC: 1998).

² National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, Washington DC: USDI, NPS, National Register, History and Education Program, 1995: 44-45.

³ NRHP, *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete Registration Form*, 1995: 44.

⁴ NRHP, *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete Registration Form*, 1995: 44.

⁵ NRHP, *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete Registration Form*, 1995: 45.

⁶ NRHP, *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete Registration Form*, 1995: 45.

⁷ NRHP, *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete Registration Form*, 1995: 45.

⁸ NRHP, *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete Registration Form*, 1995: 45.

⁹ NRHP, *National Register Bulletin: 16A How to Complete Registration Form*, 1995: 45.

¹⁰ Charles A. Birnbaum, with Christine Capella Peters, *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, (Washington DC: 1996), 5.

¹¹ NRHP, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, Washington DC: USDI, NPS, National Register, History and Education Program, 1990, revised 1998: 3.